

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members
From: Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler
Subject: Refugee Resettlement Program Eligibility Letter to U.S. Secretary of State
Date: Tuesday, November 26th, 2019

Council members,

On September 26th, President Trump signed Executive Order 13888 that changes certain practices and procedures associated the U.S. Department of State Refugee Resettlement Program. The most significant change as it affects the City is a requirement under the executive order for states and local governments to submit a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State in order to remain eligible for the refugee resettlement program.

If the City of Yakima sends a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State regarding this issue, nothing would change regarding the resettlement of refugees in the community. Yakima is currently eligible to participate in the U.S. Department of State's Refugee Resettlement Program. Refugees in the program are occasionally resettled in the Yakima area. Sending a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State is a formality required by the executive order so that Yakima can remain eligible for the resettlement program.

The deadline for submitting letters is the end of 2019. If a local governmental entity does not submit a letter by the end of the year, as of January 2020 it would no longer be eligible to participate in the refugee resettlement program.

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, along with multiple local governmental entities in Washington State, have already submitted letters to the U.S. Secretary of State affirming interest in continuing to be eligible for the refugee resettlement program. The Yakima County Commission is among the local governmental entities that have submitted letters.

The legitimacy of the Executive Order 13888 is being challenged by multiple entities in court. Several local and state officials are also urging the Trump Administration to rescind the executive order.

At its December 3rd regular meeting, the Council will be asked to direct staff to send a letter (see attached draft letter) to the U.S. Secretary of State under the mayor's signature in order to remain eligible to participate in the U.S. Department of State Refugee Resettlement Program. City staff recommends the Council take such action.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information about this issue prior to the Council's December 3rd regular meeting.